



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
TO THE PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

DATE ISSUED: May 13, 2010

REPORT NO. 101

ATTENTION: Park and Recreation Board, Agenda of May 20, 2010

SUBJECT: Proposed Changes to Kate Sessions 12 Hour Alcohol Ban

SUMMARY

Issue – Should the Committee recommend amending San Diego Municipal Code 56.54, titled “Alcoholic Beverage Consumption Prohibited in certain Areas,” to delete Kate Sessions Park from the 12 Hour Ban, San Diego Muni Code appendix 56.54B and add Kate Sessions Park to the list of parks under a 24 Hour ban, San Diego Municipal Code appendix 56.54A.

BACKGROUND

Kate Sessions Park currently is listed in the San Diego Municipal Code 56.54 with a 12 Hour Ban from 8:00 P.M. to 8:00 A.M. The Municipal Code also listed parks that have a 16 Hour Ban as well as a 24 Hour Ban.

In 2009, Council District 2 staff along with staff from the Police and Park and Recreation Departments met with the Friends of Kate Sessions Park group and other interested community residents to discuss their concerns regarding alcohol consumption at Kate Sessions Park. Many community members were present and the discussion included a wide range of viewpoints.

Three commitments were agreed to at the meeting: 1) There was consensus for establishment of a one year evaluation period to be completed before initiating the process for a 24 hour ban; 2) the Police Department would implement targeted enforcement at the park; and 3) the Park and Recreation Department would trim up perimeter shrubbery, place a portable toilet in the area where public urination was occurring, paint a red curb along one side of the driveway into Kate Sessions to allow for better visibility, and place a cage over the park’s backflow to prevent illegal use of city water.

Subsequently, the Friends of Kate Sessions held additional meetings in the fall of 2009 and decided that rather than wait for the completion of a full year to evaluate the situation, they would request the implementation of a 24 hour ban as soon as possible. The issue was placed on the agenda of the January 19, 2010 meeting of the Santa Clara/Pacific Beach Recreation Council.

STAKEHOLDERS'S INPUT

The following is a chronology of stakeholder input on this matter:

- January 19, 2010 Friends of Kate Sessions Park, a Committee of City Beautiful of San Diego Inc. submitted a request to the Santa Clara/Pacific Beach Recreation Council to replace the 12 hour ban on alcohol use at Kate Sessions with a 24 hour ban.
- January 19, 2010 the Santa Clara/Pacific Beach Recreation Council voted 4-0, with one abstention to recommend changing the 12 hour alcohol ban at Kate Sessions Park to a 24 hour alcohol ban.
- December 1, 2009 the Pacific Beach Planning Group voted 11-2 to recommend that Kate Sessions Park be added to the list of neighborhood and community parks in the City of San Diego that have a 24 hour ban on alcohol use.
- February 21, 2010 the Parks and Beaches Committee of the La Jolla Town Council voted 7-0, with one abstention to recommend changing the 12 hour alcohol ban at Kate Sessions Park to a 24 hour alcohol ban.
- March 11, 2010 the La Jolla Town Council voted 13-0 in favor of a 24 hour alcohol ban at Kate Sessions Park.
- March 24, 2010 the La Jolla Parks and Recreation Inc. voted 10-0, with two abstentions to support a 24 hour alcohol ban at Kate Sessions Park.
- April 7, 2010, the Community Parks I Division Area Committee voted (10-0) recommending changing the 12 hour alcohol ban at Kate Sessions Park to a 24 hour alcohol ban.

DISCUSSION

During the preparation of this report, the Police Department was asked if there were any enforcement issues at the park since the Police Department evaluation period had begun. The Police Department indicated there were no exceptional enforcement issues at Kate Sessions Neighborhood Park, including enforcement issues involving alcohol, with the exception of the some enforcement issues related to the July 4, 2009 holiday.

Over the years, the park has attracted heavy use on holidays and for special events without incident. Frequently the attendees at these events are from outside the adjacent neighborhood. With the implementation of the permanent 24 hour ban in Mission Bay Park and surrounding beaches and park areas, Kate Sessions Park remains the nearest park that can accommodate large groups and where alcohol can be served.

Since 24 hour ban on alcohol at Mission Bay Park and nearby beaches, Department staff and nearby residents, have noticed a change in the frequency use and the number of park users. While alcohol has always been allowed, the use of alcohol has become increasingly more prevalent during park activities. The social use of alcohol continues, but so called "binge" drinking seems more noticeable.

In recent months alcohol related activities seem to have increased. Local radio stations and internet groups have publicized Kate Sessions Memorial Park for large gatherings of various types, sometimes with connections to an alcoholic beverage sponsor or an emphasis on the availability of alcohol at the event. Some events during the last year have brought participants by bus or large vans.

In the view of many community members who use the park, this change in the character of park usage since the beach alcohol ban was put in place, has made the park less hospitable to a broad spectrum of users while exacerbating parking and traffic problems in streets surrounding the park. For these reasons the neighborhood has requested an alcohol ban be implemented at the park.

Fiscal Impact- Minimal cost for new signage.

Environmental Impact- This activity is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Recommend approval of the proposed ban with modifications.
2. Do not amend San Diego Municipal Code 56.54.

Respectfully submitted,

Clay Bingham
Deputy Director, Community Parks I

CB/cb

Attachment: Kate Sessions Park Map

